

# Article by Voorhoeve: Epicurus on Pleasure, A Complete Life, and Death: A Defense

Post by "Cassius" of March 4, 2022 at 9:20 AM

not comparatively, but for its own sake, which constitutes happiness, must be maximally pleasurable. In a nutshell: on the Epicurean view I shall propose, an Epicurean sage's life is complete once they have attained the supremely pleasurable state, so that more time alive in this state (rather than dying) would not make their life as a whole better. On this view, therefore, being deprived by death of more such pleasurable time does not make the sage's death bad for them.

I don't buy this, and *ONCE AGAIN* I think the problem is we're getting tripped up by logical games about "good" and "bad" and the "greatest good" and so forth.

Why is it a problem to hold both, at the same time, that:

(1) the state of being dead is nothing to fear in itself, because it causes us no pain, because "we" are not there to experience it,

AND

(2) the state of being alive is desirable, as it is our only our chance to experience pleasure, so therefore we want to live as long as we can experience enough pleasure to make the pains of growing older worthwhile.

I see nothing contradictory between those two, and in the letter to Menoeceus Epicurus said:

Quote

And he who counsels the young man to live well, but the old man to make a good end, is foolish, not merely because of the desirability of life, but also because it is the same training which teaches to live well and to die well. Yet much worse still is the man who says it is good not to be born but 'once born make haste to pass the gates of Death'. For if he says this from conviction why does he not pass away out of life? For it is open to him to do so, if he had firmly made up his mind to this. But if he speaks in jest, his words are idle among men who cannot receive them.

So my view is that Epicurus held BOTH, at the same time, without contradiction, that:

(1) the state of being dead is nothing to fear in itself, because it causes us no pain, because "we" are not there to experience it, AND

(2) the state of being alive is desirable, as it is our only our chance to experience pleasure, so therefore we want to live as long as we can experience enough pleasure to make the pains of growing older worthwhile.